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pation of the children varies according to their sex. The girls from about ten on help their mothers in the gardens. The boys wander around the village, playing and taking care of their younger sisters and brothers. If there is any fishing, they stand about on the fringe looking on, as they do also in housebuilding or any other occupation. A slightly older boy assists his father in work connected with the gardens, when his help is needed.

The women, and men too, if they have gone to the gardens, return to the village in the early afternoon, usually about two o'clock. This varies, and occasionally they come back at noon, or sometimes late afternoon, about four or five o'clock. They arrive back hot, dusty, and tired, and immediately bathe in the sea, coming out cleansed and refreshed. Both men and women wear their loin-cloths when they go into the sea and put on dry ones when they come out. There are no separate bathing-places for the sexes, but as a matter of practice the two sexes never bathe very near each other at the same time. After bathing they perform the toilet of the day, combing their hair and powdering it with white lime. If they feel so inclined they may add some facial decoration; painting a yellow ring around one eye is a favourite style. Then, if they are hungry, there is a piece of cold baked taro in the house, left over from the day before.

Now come the preparations for the evening meal, mostly the woman's task and usually done communally by the members of one hamlet or two neighbouring ones. Occasionally, if they have returned late from the gardens, the cooking is done individually. The women scrape the taro and the men bring in the firewood and the leaves and make the *liga*, a pile of hot stones, in which the food is baked. If it is an ordinary meal and no fish or animal is to be baked, the men are not very busy and look after the babies, or stroll about chatting with each other. The women work seriously,

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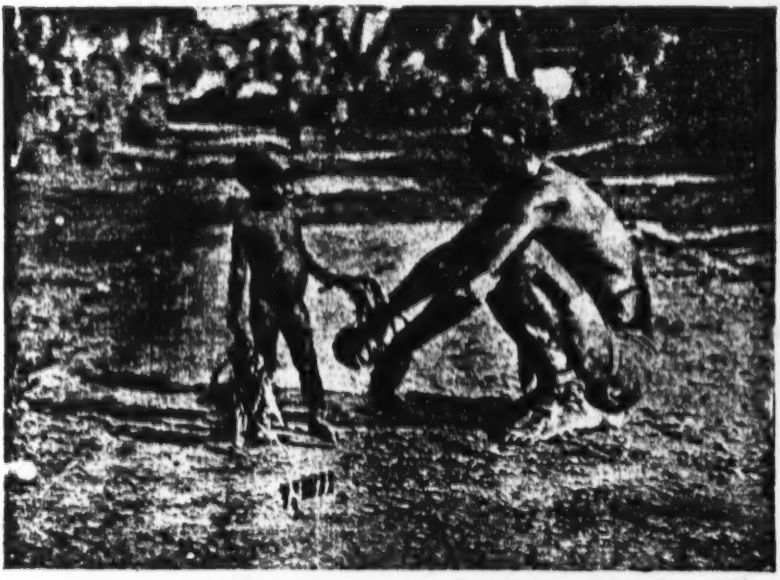

FATHER PLAYING WITH HIS SON

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LITTLE GIRLS PLAYING AT DANCING

[Facing p. 70]

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CHAPTER III

CHILDHOOD

CHILDHOOD is primarily the time of education. How are the ideals and patterns of behaviour of this Melanesian society in Lesu set before the child? In what manner does the child make his transition to adult life? These are among the important problems of education. In discussing childhood, it will occasionally be necessary to differentiate between early and later periods, the former between the end of the suckling period (the age of two and three years) to the age of about six, and the latter from six to puberty.

After the nursing period the child is no longer the pet of the whole community, for by this time some other newborn baby, who is being fondled and petted by everyone, probably has taken his place. But while there is a lessening of the affectionate demonstrativeness shown to the infant, the attitude of both the adults and older children is that of careful attention to the young child. It is merely the fondling and petting which are omitted. Children from three to six are rarely left alone. They are either with their parents in the village, or, if the latter are away in the gardens or fishing, they are with their older brothers and sisters, classificatory ones if there are no real ones. Larat, a little girl of about ten, frequently watches over her classificatory son,[1] who is just at the end of his infancy. She holds the little boy as she sings one of the dancing songs. Lamai, a boy of about ten, looks after his younger brother Lisit very well, and is all attention when Lisit cries.

When the parents are in the village the little children follow them about. They are present at all the adult activities—dance rehearsals, rites, communal preparations of food, etc.—

[1] In this case her mother's sister's daughter's son.

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851 Discipline during the early period of childhood is not very severe. Children are to do as they are told; their duties are light and consist mostly in fetching and carrying small articles for their parents; a spanking is the penalty for disobedience. One child who lived in my hamlet cried more often than the others, though as far as I could observe she was no less obedient than the other children. But her mother had a decidedly quick temper, was irritated more easily than the other women of the hamlet, and had very little self-control. The father was easy-going, and the child frequently ran to him after she had been slapped by her mother. But it does not happen often that an aduk's irritation is vented on the child. Respect for the wishes and commands of their elders is also impressed upon the children by their observation of adult behaviour. They see their own parents meeting the wishes of the grandparents, and always it is the oldest people present who are the most important.

PLAY

857 When the children are not bystanders or assistants in some adult activity, they can usually be found on the beach, or playing in the shallow water off the reef. They may be making holes in the sand and forming small balls out of the moist sand, which they throw into the water or up into the air to see how far they will go, or there will be a frolic while they bathe in the sea. Throwing stones at birds they also find amusing. Accompanied by children of about ten, they may go to the bush to look for the *nownowg nuts* (specie of almond), or a small group of children may sit and chatter about what their parents are doing: the mother is planting in the garden, the father is putting a new roof on the house; or conversation may turn to what they have in the house to eat, perhaps the fact that there are plenty of bananas will be commented upon. Climbing trees to get a fresh coconut is another part

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of children's play. I observed only one organized game, a warlike one for boys, in which imitation spears were thrown at a target.

SEXUAL PLAY

Nights when the moon is full are the best playtime for children, as well as for adults. Then the children of both sexes may be found on the sandy beach playing at ritual dancing, or imitating adult life in their sexual play, which consists in the boy and girl standing very close together, the sexual organs of one touching those of the other, but not penetrating. It is usually done quite openly, in public, and the adults smile upon it and regard it as the natural order of things. This kind of play occurs from the age of about four. Occasionally a boy and girl will steal away into the bush for it, which is merely imitating the adult in more detail. The children have rather full knowledge since they sleep in the same room with their parents, the house consisting of only one room, and since all of life is discussed freely in front of them. Just as the adults of the same moiety may neither marry nor have any sex relations, so also a boy and girl of the same moiety may not indulge in sexual play. If this rule should be broken the children would be lectured, beaten, and thoroughly shamed.[1] The adults appear to be well aware of the laws of habit formation, and they take no chance on letting the children transgress an incest taboo even in play.

Early childhood is a careless and carefree time. Children are left to amuse themselves as they will, or they simply follow the adults and look on at their activities. An older brother or sister, parent, or grandparent, is always present to see that they come to no harm. As a whole, the children are in the background. They are given sufficient care to see that they do not fall into trouble, but they are not the centre of attention. For the most part they are onlookers and minor

[1] It did not happen, as far as I know, during my visit.

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857 participants in the adult activities. It is in this that much of their education consists.

LATER CHILDHOOD

868 As the children grow older and pass into the period of
857 from six years to puberty there is a gradual increase in their participation in the village life and a consequent gain in skill. Girls are kept busier than boys. Quite little girls of four or five years will lay leaves in the sun on the sand and, when they are dry, bring them to their mothers for wrapping the taro. Later on they will help cut off the ends of the taro, and by the time they are about eleven years old they scrape the taro and wrap it in bundles to be baked, just as the adult women do. By the time a girl is ten or so she will be helping her mother with the strenuous work of planting taro in the garden. She will, however, only work about half as long as her mother does. These little girls are thus kept quite busy either helping their mothers or taking care of younger children. The little girls, who are generally in the company of older women, form no age groups, nor is there much pairing off of two girls. In Lesu one older girl of about ten was very frequently with two younger girls, and there was a friendliness between them, but mostly she was there as a protector.

BOYS' LIFE COMPARED WITH GIRLS' LIFE

The life of the little boys, between the ages of six and twelve, varies from these girls of the same age. The boys roam about in groups, playing in a more or less desultory fashion. They watch the adult male activities, but do not participate as actively as the girls do in the women's work. When the men are fishing the boys are present, eagerly watching it all, but they do not participate. No boy has a fishing spear or net, although a girl of his age owns a *tsip*, the shell used to scrape the taro. But the boys assist in the

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communal cooking. It is a masculine task to bring in the leaves which are used for wrapping the taro and for covering the *liga*, and in this duty the boys render great assistance. At the feast, when the men were making plans for some communal rites, the speaker told the boys to bring in leaves, and that if they did not they would get nothing to eat. While this was greeted by laughter on the part of the boys, they later hastened to bring in the leaves. A boy is seen carrying a load of leaves bigger than he is, or helping his father clean the fish. He may also shred a coconut, a masculine task. He will watch his father and the other men as they prepare a pig to be baked. A boy of eleven helps his father to clear the bush ground for a new garden, but this is not work that takes up much of his time, for new gardens are not made every day.

The boys share with the girls the duties of taking care of their younger sisters and brothers, but even that leaves them more free time than girls. They frequently stroll through the bush, playing in the water, or on the beach, at the same time looking after their little brothers. I never saw a similar group of girls. These boys have access to the men's house and are present at all the masculine rites and feasts, where they receive their share of the food, listen to the speeches, and witness trading transactions. They are quiet on these occasions, obviously enjoying their food and never interrupting or taking any part in the proceedings. Even their seniors, youths and young men, listen respectfully as the old men talk. The fact that the boys of a village are circumcised together when they are about eight or ten years of age, that they then spend several months excluded from all females, that after this they sleep in the men's house, must help to set this pattern of age grouping among them.[1] There is no similar rite for any group of girls.

Within a group of boys, one often finds a pairing off of two boys and the formation of particular friendships. This occurs

[1] The circumcision rites will be described in the following chapter.

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most often between a boy of ten or twelve and an older boy of sixteen or seventeen. It is, as far as I could observe, a kind of hero worship on the part of the younger boy. The two are companions and friends, walk around arm in arm or hand in hand, and the younger one acts as a fag to the older, obeying the orders of the latter. If the two are occupied in some joint task, such as carrying water, it is the younger who will carry the heaviest and longest bamboo trunk filled with water.[1] This division of labour is the rule among all groups of boys, whether there are pairs of friends within the group or not. The friendship between two boys of different ages is frequently found between two boys of the same clan. Lagawa, a boy of about ten years, is a member of the *Solema* clan and lives in the hamlet of Ponambatawa, at one end of the village of Lesu. At the other end of the village, in the hamlet of Penguli, lives Ladawin, a boy in his late teens and also of the *Solema* clan. Ladawin and Lagawa are very good friends. One day Lagawa came to Penguli to visit Ladawin and stayed with him in the men's house. After about a week's time, Lagawa's father came to take him home. The boy refused to go and sat on the ground sobbing. Then the father took him by the hand, but still the boy refused to rise or move. The father tried to drag him along the ground, but gave up the attempt. Ladawin and a few members of the boy's clan stood to one side and said nothing. A few other men who were there talked kindly to the boy, advising him to go home, and saying that later he could come for another visit. But the boy continued to weep and did not move. Finally, the father walked off without his son. After he had

[1] Frequently water was carried for me by a whole group of boys, particularly when I needed a large quantity for developing photographs. Each time I noticed that the smaller boys carried the heaviest loads, while the older boys brought the smallest containers. I casually mentioned the matter to one of the older boys, who took the division of tasks quite as a matter of course and did not even think it worth talking about. It was the accepted pattern between younger and older boys.

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gone Lagawa stood up, stopped crying, took Ladawin's hand, and together the two boys went to the beach. Lagawa remained at Penguli for over a month, taking part in its daily life and spending most of his time in Ladawin's company. He appeared very contented. His father did not return again for him and the boy went home a month or so later on his own initiative.

This incident is of interest from several points of view. First, it shows the friendship between a younger and older boy.[1] Second, it is an interesting example of the limits of a father's authority over his son and of the bonds between clan relatives.

If the orthodox rule of matrilocal residence is not observed, a boy frequently runs away from home to his matrilineal relatives. Under the same circumstances a girl sometimes runs away to the hamlet of her clan relatives. The parents can never compel the children to return. They come back when they feel like it, and this is regarded as normal behaviour for the children. After the incident when Lagawa's father tried to persuade him to come home, there was no discussion by any of the onlookers. When I began to talk about it, they took the attitude that the boy was "within his rights," and that the whole incident was a normal one in daily life.

Another happening throws some light on the parent-child pattern. Pulong is rather fond of gossip and loafing, and at sunset, which is pig feeding time, she is sometimes reluctant to leave my veranda, or some other place, where she has

[1] Similar pairing off of an older and younger boy was observed among non-clan relatives. There was the friendship of my cook, Sinbanimous, married, and at least in his late teens, and Malalis, a boy of about twelve. Malalis followed Sinbanimous about and they were constant companions. When I left Lesu, Sinbanimous left too, as he and his wife were returning to their own village some distance away. Malalis went with them for a long visit. As I left the island then, I do not know the further development of their friendship.

In the village there were several other such pairs of friends.

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593 been chatting enjoyably. Quite frequently her daughter, Batu, a young girl just past puberty, will tell her that it is time to feed the pigs. It must be remembered that in both the incidents just described the children had reached puberty, but, what is more important, they were behaving according to the social pattern. It was Pulong's duty to feed the pigs at this time. It is expected that children will run away from home to the place where their clan relatives live. If the child follows the social pattern, the adult, even though personally inconvenienced, has no authority to make him do otherwise.

851 535 868 Both boys and girls participate in the ritual dancing as soon as they are able to walk. Little girls of six follow behind their mothers at the dance rehearsals, and by the time they are ten or eleven participate in the dances at the rites. The boys participate similarly in the male dances. For several nights after a rite is over, very young children from about four up will be found on the beach dancing in imitation of the adult dances they have recently witnessed. The children have leaves twined around their hair and stuck in their *biuk* (arm band) just as the older dancers.

867 593 As the children learn the dances, so also do they learn the rules of kinship behaviour, even though they are not fully enforced until after puberty. Although the parents are both protectors and disciplinarians, it does not mean that there is no affection between them and their children. After a child has passed his suckling period there is not the demonstrativeness of affection between him and his parents, as there was in infancy, but that it exists is evidenced by the care lavished on the child. Sometimes I have even seen the inverse, that is, an attitude of solicitude on the part of a child for his parent. One little girl was very much worried when her father climbed a tree with its trunk slippery and wet from recent rain. Another girl was cast down and worried when her mother was ill.